

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
for
Rangeland Improvements**

EA-NM-060-2001-0105

ALLOTMENTS 63059 & 63064

Grazing Permittee/Lessee:

Leon and Teresa Ham

Location: Township 11 South, Range 20 East, sections 3, 4, 5, 8, and 9

May, 2001

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Roswell Field Office
Roswell, New Mexico**

I. Introduction

This environmental assessment fulfills the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirement by providing the necessary site-specific analysis of the effects of authorizing new water pipeline construction, pipeline reconstruction, and new electric fence construction on allotments #63059 and #63064. The proposed projects would be authorized by a Cooperative Agreement for Range Improvements.

A. Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action

The purpose of issuing a Cooperative Agreement for the proposed projects is in response from a request of the grazing allotment permittee/lessee to construct the projects. The projects will establish a permanent water system which links together two pipelines to ensure a reliable water supply. The new pipeline extensions would place water into new areas to benefit livestock and game species of wildlife. The proposed fence would create an additional pasture for livestock management. The completion of all of the proposed projects will allow the grazing permittee/lessee to implement a more intensive grazing system on the allotments.

These projects have been developed in conjunction with the National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) under the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP).

B. Conformance with Land Use Planning

The Roswell Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (October 1997) has been reviewed to determine if the proposed action conforms with the land use plan's Record of Decision. The proposed action is consistent with the RMP/EIS.

C. Relationships to Statutes, Regulations, or Other Plans

The proposed action is consistent with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1700 et seq.); the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 (43 U.S.C. 315 et seq.), as amended; the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq.), as amended; the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1535 et seq.) as amended; the Federal Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978 (43 U.S.C. 1901 et seq.); Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management and Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands.

Proposed Action and Alternatives

A. Proposed Action:

The proposed action is to authorize the Leon and Teresa Ham to construct the following:

- Approximately 18,820 feet of new water pipeline of which 9,870 will be located on Federal land. All new drinking trough locations will be located on private land.
- Approximately 4,570 feet of pipeline reconstruction of which 2,870 feet will be located on Federal land. This action will replace an existing pipeline that was permitted in 1960 (project #660010).
- Approximately 5,300 feet of electric fence. This fence may be converted to a permanent barbed wire fence in the future if the electric fence fails to hold livestock and the location is determined to be adequate for a permanent fence.

The pipeline will be installed by ripping the ground with a crawler tractor and feeding the pipe through a tube into the ground. The pipe will be 1¼ inch diameter polyethylene (black plastic) pipe. In areas where depth to bedrock prevents ripping, material will be pushed over the pipe from the adjacent area.

The electric fence will be installed utilizing standard type fence posts of fiberglass or steel material. Electric wire will be either high tensile steel wire or fiber tape with steel strands. The fence will be constructed on site with common hand tools, no ground disturbance such as right of way clearing will be necessary.

Leon and Teresa Ham will pay all costs associated with the projects. The projects would be authorized by a Cooperative Agreement for Rangeland Improvements between the Bureau of Land Management and Leon and Teresa Ham.

B. No Action alternative:

This alternative would not authorize any new range improvements, the area would remain as is. Livestock water would not be as reliable as under the proposed action and the development of an intensive grazing system would not occur.

III. Affected Environment

A. General Setting

Grazing allotments #63059 and 63064 are located in Lincoln county, approximately 25 miles west Roswell, New Mexico. The area is rolling hills with shallow soils over limestone, deeper soils are found in the drainages and low areas. Vegetation of the area is mainly grasses, and a few shrubs and juniper trees.

Allotment #63059 consists of 159 acres of Federal land, allotment #63064 consists of 1617 acres of Federal land. Within the ranch is also 1906 acres of private land. The allotments are currently authorized for grazing cattle.

B. Affected Resources

The following resources or values are not present or would not be affected: Prime/Unique Farmland, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Minority/Low Income Populations, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Hazardous/Solid Wastes, Wetlands/Riparian Zones, Native American Religious Concerns.

1. Soils: The soils in the area are Ector-Kimbrough, Rock Outcrop association. The soils are very shallow to shallow, well drained and found on gently sloping to moderately sloping areas. The soils are derived predominately from limestone. For in depth soil information, please refer to the Soil Survey of Lincoln County Area New Mexico. A copy of this document may be reviewed at the BLM Roswell Field Office or at most National Resources Conservation Service offices in southern New Mexico.

2. Vegetation: Vegetation in the area consists primarily of grasses with a lesser component of shrubs and forbs. The range site as described by the National Resources Conservation Service is a Very Shallow CP-4. Primary grass species are sideoats grama, black grama, and blue grama in the deeper soils.

3. Wildlife: Game species which may occur within the area include mule deer, antelope, mourning dove, and scaled quail. Raptors that utilize the area on a more seasonal basis include the Swainson's, red-tailed, and ferruginous hawks, American kestrel, and great-horned owl. Numerous passerine birds utilize the grassland areas due to the variety of grasses, forbs, and shrubs. The most common include the western meadowlark, mockingbird, horned lark, killdeer, loggerhead shrike, and vesper sparrow.

The warm prairie environment supports a large number of reptile species compared to higher elevations. The more common reptiles include the short-horned lizard, lesser

earless lizard, eastern fence lizard, coachwhip, bullsnake, prairie rattlesnake, and western rattlesnake.

A general description of wildlife occupying or potentially utilizing the proposed action area is located in the Affected Environment Section (p. 3-62 to 3-71) of the Draft Roswell RMP/EIS (9/1994).

4. Threatened and Endangered Species: There are no known threatened or endangered species of plant or animals on allotments #63059 and 63064. A list of federal threatened, endangered, and candidate species reviewed for this EA can be found in Appendix 11 of the Roswell RMP (AP11-2). Of the listed species, the bald eagle may be observed in the general geographic area during migration or the winter months. There are no known records of this species having occurred on the allotment, and no designated critical habitat areas are within the allotment.

5. Livestock Management: The allotment is operated as a cow/calf ranch by Leon and Teresa Ham.

Water wells and pipelines provide livestock water for the allotment. Livestock are moved throughout the ranch for pasture rotation. Cattle are also moved by controlling watering locations and by using feed supplements to attract the livestock to different areas. This practice allows areas which may be heavier utilized to achieve grazing rest.

6. Visual Resources: The allotment is located in a Class III Visual Management Area. The Class III rating means that contrasts to the basic elements caused by a management activity may be evident and begin to attract attention in the landscape. The changes, however should remain subordinate to the existing landscape.

7. Water Quality: No perennial surface water is found on the Public Land on this allotment.

8. Air Quality: Air quality in the region is generally good. The allotment is in a Class II area for the Prevention of Significant Deterioration of air quality as defined in the public Clean Air Act. Class II areas allow a moderate amount of air quality degradation.

9. Recreation: Since this allotment has no facility based recreational activities, only dispersed recreational opportunities occur on these lands. Recreational activities that may occur include hunting, sightseeing, Off Highway Vehicle Use, primitive camping, horseback riding and hiking.

Lincoln County road #E034 runs through these allotments which provides access to some of the BLM lands. Permission to cross private land must be obtained from the private landowner.

Off Highway Vehicle designation for public lands within this allotment are classified as "Limited" to existing roads and trails.

10. Cave/Karst: This allotment is located within a designated area of medium karst and cave potential. A complete significant cave or karst inventory has not been completed for the public lands located in this grazing allotment. No significant caves or karst features are known to exist within this allotment.

11. Floodplains: The Tecolote drainage in Township 11 south, Range 20 east, section 5 is listed on Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) maps as a floodplain.

12. Invasive, Non-Native (Noxious) Species: There are no known populations of noxious weeds in the area of the proposed action. After soil disturbance, care will be taken to monitor the area for these plants so action can be taken for eradication. This affected resource will not be given further consideration, all alternatives will have similar impacts.

13. Cultural: An Archeological/Cultural clearance was performed on the proposed project locations by the Roswell Field Office archeologist. No significant sites were found to alter the routing or construction of the projects. This affected resource will not be given further consideration as the proposed action will not have impacts.

IV. Environmental Impacts

A. Impacts of the Proposed Action

1. Soils: Soil will be disturbed where new pipe is installed by the equipment used for the installation. In areas where borrow material must be scraped from adjacent areas, there may be an obvious berm.

The proposed electric fence will not disturb the ground with the exception of very small localized areas where fence posts are installed. Some livestock trailing may occur adjacent to the fence which may compact the soil.

2. Vegetation: Vegetation will be destroyed during the installation of the pipeline in the immediate area of disturbance. The area will naturally re-vegetate after adequate precipitation and time.

Vegetation should not be impacted with the installation of the electric fence since no ground disturbance will be necessary.

Overall, vegetation should improve within the allotments due to improved pasture and livestock management.

3. Wildlife: Game species should benefit from the improved water reliability and additional water locations. Wildlife escape ramps are recommended for the drinking troughs located on private land.

4. T&E species: Livestock grazing resulting from issuing a grazing lease, will not negatively affect the bald eagle. It is expected that habitat and range condition would be maintained or improved by authorizing the proposed action. Habitat for wintering bald eagles would not be negatively impacted by the proposed action.

5 Livestock Management: Livestock will benefit from the proposed action. The additional water sources will mean less distance traveled for water. The additional pasture management and expected increase in forage may benefit the livestock.

6. Visual Resources: The proposed pipeline may remain a visible feature where the berm which covers the pipeline in shallow soils is located. Vegetation will help conceal the berm and minimize the linear feature.

The electric fence will be prominent when new, but as the material ages it will start to blend with the surroundings.

7. Water Quality: There would be no impacts to water quality under the proposed action.

8. Air Quality: Dust levels under the proposed action would be slightly higher than under the no action due to construction activities. This would be short-term in nature and will revert to the same as the existing situation after the area has re-vegetated. The levels would be within the limits allowed in a Class II area for the Prevention of Significant Deterioration of air quality.

9. Recreation: The proposed action should have minimal effect on recreation. The proposed fence will be an obstruction to cross but should be minimal impact because gates will be installed at any existing road crossings.

10. Caves/Karst: No known cave or karst features are known within the proposed project area. There should be no impacts associated with this action.

11. Floodplains: The pipeline route will cross the Floodplain listed by the FEMA maps. The construction across the drainage bottom will be buried as deep as possible and the surface smoothed. This would prevent surface water flow restrictions and the area will drain naturally.

B. Impacts of the No Action.

There would be impacts to the livestock operators as they would not realize the benefits associated with the proposed action. The ability to implement an intensive grazing system would not be possible under this alternative.

All other affected resources would remain the same as the current situation.

V. Cumulative Impacts

Roads, fences, stock trails, and water well development have occurred in the past and may contribute to the cumulative impacts of the area. The proposed action on it's own will not contribute significantly to the cumulative impacts to the area.

VI. Residual Impacts

A linear area of disturbance from the pipeline and the standing fence will remain on the landscape. These features will not stand out significantly on the landscape due to the natural revegetation and aging of man-made materials.

VII. Mitigating Measures

No mitigation measures will be necessary if the proposed action is constructed as outlined by this document. The proposed action will adhere to Bureau of Land Management pipeline and fence design standards.

EA Number: NM-060-2001-0105 Allotment Numbers: 63059& 63064 Preparer: Chuck Schmidt				Action Type: Grazing Authorization Applicant: Leon and Teresa Ham	
Resource / Activity	Not Present	Not Affected	**May Be Affected	Reviewer Surname	Date
Air Quality*				Hydrologist	
Floodplains*					
Water Quality- Drinking/Ground*					
Soils/Watershed					
Vegetation				Rangeland Management Specialist	
Livestock Grazing					
Invasive, Nonnative Species*					
Wastes, Hazardous or Solids*				Hazardous Waste Spec.	
Prime/Unique Farmlands*				NRS/Realty Specialist	
Lands/Realty/ROW					
Fluid Minerals				Petroleum Engineer	
Mining Claims				Geologist	
Mineral Materials					
Threatened or Endangered Species*				Wildlife Biologist	
Wetlands/Riparian Zones*					
Wildlife Habitat					
Native American Religious Concerns*				Archaeologist	
Cultural Resources*					
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern*				Wildlife Biologist	
Wild/Scenic Rivers*				Outdoor Recreation Planner	
Wilderness*					
Cave/Karst Resources					
Outdoor Recreation					
Visual Resources					
Low Income & Minority Population Concerns					
Access/Transportation				Natural Resource Specialist	

* "Critical Element" - must be addressed in all NEPA documents.

** "Affected Element" - must be addressed in the attached Environmental Assessment.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT/RATIONALE

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT: I have reviewed this environmental assessment including the explanation and resolution of any potentially significant environmental impacts. I have determined the **proposed action** will not have significant impacts on the human environment and that preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required.

Rationale for Recommendations: The proposed action would not result in any undue or unnecessary environmental degradation. The **proposed action** will be in compliance with the Roswell Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision (October, 1997).

Signed by _____

T. R. Kreager,
Assistant Field Office Manager - Resources

30 March 2001

Date

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT/DECISION RECORD

Finding of No Significant Impacts: Based on the analysis of the potential environmental impacts contained in the attached environmental assessment, I have determined that impacts are not expected to be significant and an environmental impact statement is not required.

Decision: It is my decision to approve the proposed action of Environmental Assessment #NM-060-2001-0105 for the Leon and Teresa Ham rangeland improvements. The action is located on the Ham grazing allotments #63059 & 63064 in Township 11 south, Range 20 east, portions of sections 3, 4, 5, 8, and 9. The proposed action is as follows:

- Approximately 18,820 feet of new water pipeline of which 9,870 will be located on Federal land. All new drinking trough locations will be located on private land.
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Leon and Teresa Ham will pay all costs associated with the projects. These projects have been developed in conjunction with the National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) under the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP).

Rational for Decision: The decision to allow the proposed action would not result in any undue or unnecessary environmental degradation. The proposed action conforms to the Roswell Resource Management Plan of October 1997.

In accordance with 43 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 4100, Sec 4160.2 any applicant, permittee, lessee or other affected interests may protest this proposed decision in person or in writing to the authorized officer, within 15 days after receipt of this decision. Please be specific in your points of protest.

In the absence of a protest, this proposed decision will become the final decision without further notice. Any person who is adversely affected by a final decision of the authorized officer may file a written appeal

to the Final Decision for the purpose of a hearing before an administrative law judge under 43 CFR 4.470. A period of 30 days after the decision becomes final is provided in which to file an appeal and a petition for stay of the decision in this office (43 CFR §4160.3 [c] and §4160.4).

Signed by _____
T.R. Kreager,
Assistant Field Manager, Resources

28 May 2001

Date